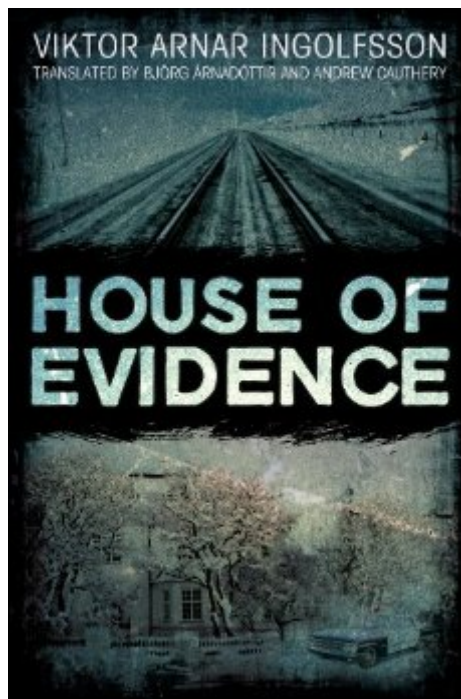


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House Of Evidence



Synopsis

On a cold January morning in 1973, inside a stately old house in Reykjavik, blood pools around Jacob Kieler Junior from a fatal gunshot wound to his chest. Detective Jǎ hann Pǎjlsson, an expert in the emerging field of forensics, is called to the scene and soon discovers something more unsettling than the murder itself: the deceased's father, Jacob Kieler Senior, a railroad engineer, was shot to death in the same living room nearly thirty years earlier. The case was officially closed as a botched robbery. Pǎjlsson soon uncovers diaries that portray Kieler Senior as an ambitious man dedicated to bringing the railroad to Iceland no matter the cost. Sensing a deeper and darker mystery afoot, the detective and his colleagues piece together through the elder Kieler's diaries a family history rich with deceit |

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Customer Reviews

The generations of men in the Kieler family are unlucky in their obsessions. They're also doomed to never die of old age; one falls from a horse and breaks his neck, a 2-year old drowns on his birthday, and another dies in a car crash on a dangerous hill in Iceland. But of most interest in Viktor Arnar Ingolfsson's *House of Evidence* are the recent two Kieler deaths, which are curiously similar

to each other. Jacob Kieler Junior has been found shot in the same parlor as his father was shot in, and the detective and forensic teams uncover additional similarities that should cause Matthias, one of the only remaining male Kielers, great concern. Will his slowly revealed suffering save him from becoming yet another Kieler fatality? (I have to note that another Kieler offspring's fate is manipulative and a bit too hammer-on-the-head.) Using entries from the 19 diaries of railroad engineer Jacob Kieler Senior and the "current day" investigation (which really takes place in 1973), Ingolfsson unwinds a lengthy but enthralling history of murders involving a missing gun, the struggle to build a railroad in Iceland, two world wars, debilitating depression - both economic and emotional, Jacob Junior's folly as he attempts to turn the family home into a museum, a single overturned chair, Nazism, a hippie historian, and a deluded European who almost made Iceland a monarchy instead of a republic. It is a credit to Ingolfsson's style that somehow this all comes together as hints and additional mysteries are meted out in regular intervals to hold the reader's interest. Ingolfsson deftly defies a key statute of fiction writing by working a long tale in which no single character is the main character.

"House of Evidence" is the third Scandinavian mystery/police procedural by the Icelandic author Viktor Arnar Ingolfsson. It, like his previous *The Flatey Enigma*, was nominated for the Glass Key Award, given by the Crime Writers Association of Scandinavia. It has now been newly translated from the Icelandic into English by Bjorg Arnadottir and Andrew Cauthery. It is, like its author, located in Reykjavik, capital of that sparsely populated, extreme northern country. The book opens at Birkihlid, stately family home of the prominent Kieler family, on a cold January morning in 1973. Jacob Kieler Junior is found dead in the parlor, having bled to death from a fatal gunshot wound in his chest. Police forensics expert Detective Johann Palsson is first at the scene. Before long, he discovers that the father of the deceased, Jacob Kieler Senior, railway engineer, was shot to death in the same living room nearly thirty years before in 1945. That killing had never been solved, but had merely been closed as a botched robbery attempt. And the two men, father and son, were killed in roughly the same place in the room. The police soon find the elder Kieler's voluminous diaries, covering more than 35 years, and charge one of their number with reading them. The story then alternates between the earlier 20th century of Jacob Senior's diaries and the 1973 investigation. The diaries disclose that the elder Kieler was an ambitious man, driven to bring the railroad to his country. He also appears to have flirted with monarchism, as he went to Germany in the 1930s to seek an aristocrat willing to be king of Iceland.

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